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The 1963 language arts project in Wagon Mound, New Mexico, was designed to make administrators and teachers aware of and concerned about the problems of teaching English to Spanish-speaking children in grades 1-12. General and specific objectives and instructional techniques stressed improvement of oral and written communication. An analysis of papers written by children in grades 2-6 revealed that usage and spelling errors were due to lack of skill in using English rather than the influence of a Spanish-speaking background. A strong emphasis on the oral-aural approach was recommended. An analysis was also made of some typical mistakes found in papers written by students in grades 7-12 and taped interviews of students in grades 2-12. Recommendations for the improvement of student writing included the need for writing frequently. (SW)

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NEW MEXICO

Western States Small Schools Project

Language Arts Project

Developed at

WAGON MOUND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

By

PETE SANTISTEVAN, *Superintendent*
and Entire Staff

STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SANTA FE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

FOREWORD 3

OBJECTIVES 4

TECHNIQUES 6

ANALYSIS OF WRITTEN AND ORAL COMPOSITION

TESSEN 7

DOXTATOR 8

SILVA 9

Foreword

This publication is to report on a project designed to make administrators and teachers (Grades 1-12) aware of and concerned about the problems of teaching English to Spanish-speaking children.

The study was conducted under the auspices of the New Mexico Western States Small Schools Project, a project directed by the New Mexico State Board of Education and financed by the Ford Foundation.

The New Mexico State Department of Education consultants were Mr. H. Paul Simpson, Specialist in Language Arts, and Mr. Henry W. Pascual, Specialist in Foreign Languages. The analysis of student writing was done by Dr. Robert J. Doxtator and Edith Tessen.

The analysis of the taped student transcriptions was done by Miss Dolores Silva.

DAN D. CHAVEZ
Project Director

What About Non-English Speakers?

By HENRY W. PASCUAL, *Director of Foreign Languages and English, New Mexico Department of Education*

More than 40 per cent of New Mexico's school population belongs to a non-Anglo culture. These children come from Spanish or Indian homes where English may not be spoken, or if it is, those who speak it may be poor models for the children to imitate. Children acquire the sound structure, the syntactic, rhythmic, intonational and pitch patterns of their native language by the time they are of school age.

In order to cope with this problem teachers must instruct children not only in comprehension but also in the use of the language. This cannot be done in a few weeks or months. In contrast, the child whose home language experiences have been exclusively in English has had six years of practice in the use of the language. As has been said, he has acquired all the speech patterns of oral English. He comes to school to learn to read and write the language he already knows. Of course, it would be naive to think that he knows all of the language he will ever use but the basic structure he does know and knows it well. The Spanish-American or the Indian child does not have this experience. Not only does he lack language facility, he may also come to school with a socio-cultural background quite different from that of the Anglo child. Facility in using a language is not only the ability to communicate ideas in the language. It is the automatic use of accepted language without glaring mistakes in its basic structure.

The basic problem then is to develop oral language skills in these children before any attempt is made at teaching them to read and write. In order to do this the teacher must determine at least the following: 1) the child's English language competency, if any; 2) language spoken by the child to anticipate effect upon English, and 3) socio-cultural background of the child for better understanding of the child's problems and to help him adjust in the classroom.

Once these have been determined these children must be introduced to a systematic developmental program in oral English. It is most important that the primary objective of the program be the development of oral skills. Reading and writing should not be introduced until a reasonable fluency has developed and the basic patterns of English absolutely mastered by the children. When one speaks of PATTERN of ENGLISH it is essential to stress that language is not merely the structural arrangement of sentences and utterances. Language is far more than sequence or order of words. It embraces intonation, stress, pitch, juncture, and the many segmental or supra-segmental signals an individual speaker may use to indicate a particular meaning. It is important for the teacher to keep in mind all relevant and meaningful aspects of language in order to develop in these children sound speech habits in English. This can not be stressed enough, for it is far more difficult to erase faulty speech habits than to learn good ones. The child who reaches high school with faulty pronunciation and intonation has a speech handicap that will affect his performance in all subjects.

Faulty pronunciation, intonation, stress, and pitch interfere with expression and may distort content in the stream of speech. When the listener is forced to focus his attention on expression, or the manner in which the speaker articulates, he loses the primary objective of oral communication —content. In order to attain automatic control of all aspects of oral expression there must be ample opportunity for continued practice. This opportunity should be provided in the classroom. The children must be guided intelligently. The teacher must take into consideration that language is a complicated apparatus. Until the child has mastered the many facets of language and can use it automatically, he will continue to have difficulties.

A special program should be provided for the child who is incompetent or semi-competent in the use of oral English. If the program is offered in pre-first grade it should be designed to merge into the standard offering in the first grade. Merging is important, for no school can or should offer different standard instructional tracks for the non-English speaker. However, it is most unfair to expect the non-speaker to perform on the same level as the native speaker.

It is obvious that one full year dedicated exclusively to oral expression will help the non-English speaker develop a functional vocabulary. In order to maintain high standards of pronunciation, intonation, pitch phrasing, and all relevant aspects of standard spoken English, teachers should be alert and ready to help the non-native speaker throughout his entire school career. Only through continuous practice and correction will these children achieve the proper speech patterns of English.

The General and Specific Objectives

A. GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To help our children to express themselves more clearly and adequately through every means of communication;
2. To develop skills which will enable the children to receive with comprehension and appreciation ideas expressed through every means of communication;
3. To improve the art of oral communication;
4. To improve the quality and increase the quantity of the vocabulary used by the students in all means of communication;
5. To develop the power to judge and to reason effectively;
6. To instill self-confidence;
7. To develop in students, knowledge of the mechanics and interest and appreciation to evaluate themselves and other members of society;
8. To increase enthusiasm and appreciation for the language arts.

B. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. For the Primary Group (pre-first through second).

a. Oral Expression

1) To develop at each level a given number of concepts (by using the association of meanings with words in the speaking and reading vocabulary through the use of charts, films, filmstrips, pictures, blackboard, bulletin board, field trips, idiomatic expressions and first-hand experiences, etc.);
2) To develop better pronunciation and enunciation (through use of phonics and articulation, etc.);
3) To develop skills to bring about better listening habits and comprehension (through assemblies, games, poetry, recordings, etc.)
4) To develop better habits of self-discipline in reasoning and judgment in all of the language arts (through guidance, the use of field trips, first-hand experiences, pictures, illustrations, etc.);
5) To develop better ways of teacher-pupil evaluation (through the use of work calendars, files, diaries, grouping, pupil-experience aids, by evaluation by experts in the language arts, etc.);
6) To develop an appreciation and enthusiasm for the language arts (through the use of dramatics, art, music, poetry, pictures, first-hand experiences, etc.).

2. For the Intermediate Group (3rd through 6th).

a. Oral Expression.

1) To improve group reading (through the use of machines, films, etc.);
2) To develop self-confidence and improve oral expression, to improve and encourage group discussion, and to develop the student's responsibility as a member of a group (through the use of dramatization, reading clubs, oral reports, etc.).

b. Written Expression.

1) To develop skills necessary to assemble and document reference material;
2) To achieve correct spelling in all areas (by means of teaching spelling words in context);
3) To develop the necessary skills for formal and informal letter writing;
4) To develop the basic mechanical skills of the outlining process;
5) To require that students be able to write cursive legibly in the intermediate group.

c. Vocabulary.

To teach a given number of words and a given number of idiomatic expressions.

d. Reasoning and Judgment.

To develop the power to reason and judge effectively according to the maturity of the student.

e. Appreciation.

To guide the improvement of appreciation and enthusiasm for the language arts.

3. For the Junior High Group (7th through 8th).

   a. Oral and Written Expression.

      1) To train young people to use leisure time wisely (by evaluating current publications, films, radio news-casts, television programs and being able to communicate with others, these ideas);

      2) To improve and increase the skill in students to compile information, to do research, and to formulate opinions from material surveyed as valuable in establishing self-confidence.

   b. Listening.

      To develop the listening skills which will enable the students to identify specific details, to evaluate the speaker's argument, and to solve problems (by applying the speaker's idea to the students' experiences, etc.).

   c. Vocabulary.

      To master a given number of words and a given number of idiomatic expressions by the end of the eighth year.

   d. Reasoning and Judgment.

      1) To establish a background for successful interpretation of selections read by teaching students to scrutinize, read, and review material carefully;

      2) To train students to think logically by developing the skills of argumentation, judgment, and reasoning (through the use of panels, debates, etc.).

   e. Appreciation.

      To develop the skills of critical and creative thinking which will enable students with different interests to appreciate the language arts.

4. For the High School (9th through 12th)

   a. Oral Expression.

      To provide attractive speech situations, (such as debate, class discussions, etc.) frequently for all students and to provide training in speech methods so as to develop self-confidence in the overcoming of inhibitions.

   b. Written Expression.

      1) To require that students understand and use the methods of description, narration, and exposition;

      2) To develop a desire for improvement in penmanship to the point of legibility.

   c. Vocabulary.

      To require that high school students learn and use a given number of idiomatic expressions each year.

   d. Reasoning and Judgment.

      To develop the affective faculties so as to increase appreciation for the arts throughout the school.

Techniques:

News items brought by students
Sentence pattern drills
Dramatization and puppet shows
Choral reading
Multi-level reading opportunities
Use of Controlled reader
Games such as Password
Tongue twisters and riddles
Crossword puzzles
Charades
Oral reports and debates
Tape recordings
Listening for and recording errors heard
Use of resource persons as speakers
Group composition
Role playing
Inductive teaching of grammar

An Analysis of Written Work

OF THE WAGON MOUND, NEW MEXICO SCHOOL CHILDREN IN GRADES TWO THROUGH SIX

Presented January 28, 1963 in Wagon Mound

By

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Based on 136 papers written by Wagon Mound school children in grades two through six, Edythe Tessen finds that the usage and spelling errors are due to a lack of skill in using the English language rather than because of the influence of Spanish-speaking backgrounds. These papers seem to reflect the speaking ability of the children. Tessen observes "Good speaking and listening habits must be firmly establishment before writing is introduced. This is true whether the child is learning his native language or a second one."

These usage errors will give an idea of the problems related to the influence of Spanish.

1. Omission of the subject noun or pronoun (8 papers);
2. Agreement of adjective and noun (1 paper);
3. The use of possessive (1 paper);
4. Preposition confusion—in for on (5 papers);
5. Omission of ing (5 papers);
6. Omission of initial "h" sound;
7. Confusion of number (12 papers).

Other errors that may be traced to translation do not occur often enough to be significant nor to be considered valid reasons for blaming poor use of English on another language background.

"Spelling problems seem to be caused by the same factors which cause usage problems—carelessness, lack of interest, lack of knowledge of the sounds represented by various letters, and ignorance of the way letters are written.

The fact that *Santa Fe* is variously misspelled bears out two rather obvious facts—these children do not hear the sounds in their own language and do not know how to write or spell words which are native to them.

English sounds in the following words are difficult for the Spanish speaker—cap for cup; fance for fence; less for is; hes for his; these for this; leaves for lives. The native Spanish speaker does not hear the English schva; homonyms cause a number of misspellings.

Tessen recommends that strong emphasis be placed on the oral-aural approach to develop good listening and speaking habits as well as confidence in the use of English. Conversations memorized by students, then dictated and corrected by the teacher might be useful. Pattern practice, chain drills, substitution and transformation drills should be developed to reinforce grammatical items. Spelling words should be presented in sentences never in isolation. Over-drill is necessary to establish spelling habits.

Tessen's concluding paragraph: We all know children and adults who have been reared in dual-language environments and speak both languages well. On the other hand, we are all familiar with those who never master acceptable usage of the mother tongue. This latter group generally falls in what we consider the culturally-deprived. Therefore, it seems that it behooves us to develop cultural aspects in order to stimulate the desire to learn acceptable patterns; in order to improve their outlook on life and their own life situations —providing such goals are desired.

Recommendations

FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE WRITING OF STUDENTS IN WAGON MOUND SECONDARY SCHOOLS MADE AS A RESULT OF AN ANALYSIS OF THEIR WRITING

By
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Based on papers written by students, grades 7-12, at Wagon Mound school, Dr. Robert Doxtator made the following recommendations:

Special grouping, placing both senior and junior high students together, on the basis of ability to perform on students' own writing (not standardized tests) was advised. The need is to improve sentence structure. This is not to be done by asking students to pick out subjects and predicates or sentences from lists of sentences. The students are to be grouped upon their ability to write frequent, short assignments. All classes, not just English classes, should require writing. One item should be concentrated upon for a given period of time and rewriting should be consistently required.

Spelling is a major problem in all papers. Spelling is not to be taught in isolation — from word lists. Care should be taken to provide as many concrete examples of new words as possible. Again such problems are the province of all teachers.

The opaque or overhead projector using student's own writings instead of textbook illustrations is recommended.

Provision of many cultural experiences by use of films, magazines, recordings, field trips is strongly suggested.

Finally, one caution, refrain from talking about a "bi-lingual problem" because many of the errors are errors of standard English usage.

Dolores Silva analyzed tapes made in interviews with Wagon Mound students, grades 2-12.

"This paper proceeds by first establishing criteria applicable to the general problem of effective learning. These criteria will be applied to language learning. These will then serve as a basis for a description of the Master Teacher of English as a second language. This will be followed by a phonological analysis of the Wagon Mound students' speech.

"The process of learning in children has been a subject of study for centuries. The best thinkers on this topic set at least the following four requirements for a successful teaching-learning situation:

1) The teacher should instill logical and effective habits of thought.
2) The teacher should give rise to a healthy curiosity by exposing the pupil to the joy of independent discovery.
3) The teacher should help enable the student to develop wholesome ethical values.
4) The teacher should prepare the pupils to set realistic goals for themselves.

Requirement (1) is necessary and basic to requirements (2), (3), and (4). Once a child has learned how to think well, curiosity, healthy values and realistic goals would, hopefully, begin to emerge. It is first necessary to clarify the notion of "logical and effective habits of thought" and to demonstrate the application of this notion to language teaching-learning.

"Basically, good thinking rests upon knowing how to ask the right questions, either consciously or unconsciously."

Analysis of Spanish-English interference phenomena show "at least two types of bilingual mistakes appropriate to this discussion: (1) Spanish-speakers may have one phoneme of their language corresponding to more than one phoneme of English, and hence confuse two phonemes of the second language; (2) there may be a one-to-one correspondence between the relevant phonemes of the two languages, but mispronunciation results nevertheless."

Some Typical Mistakes

1) Examples of common mistakes due to failure to distinguish between English tense and lax vowels:

	Student	English word	Student's Pronunciation	Comments
1	Senior #1	*middle*	[mi:dəl]	A long, very high, front vowel, with no off-glide, is produced instead of a short, not quite so high, front vowel.
2	Junior #9	*still*	[stl:I]	See comment above
3	Freshman #17	*live*	[li:v]	See comment above
4	Freshman #17	*den*	[dɛ:n]	This student apparently makes the tongue positions concomitant with the lax series of English vowels, but nevertheless imposes length and tenseness upon these vowels. Since he does not add off-glides to tense English vowels, he apparently distinguishes many vowels by tongue position alone. He needs only to be taught to add off-glides to tense vowels and to shorten lax vowels.
5	Eighth #2	*finish*	[fi:nis]	See comment to number 1.
6	Eighth #5	*straight*	[stre:t]	The only mistake here is the failure to add an off-glide.
7	Second #7) Third #6) Seventh #3)	*look-*	[lu:k-]	This pronunciation mistake is very similar to that made in number 1, above. A long, very high back vowel, with no off-glide, is pronounced instead of a short, not quite so high back vowel.
8	Fourth #3) Fifth #1) Seventh #3)	*bushes*	[bu:səz]	See comment to number 7.
9	Fifth #9) Third #1)	*trees*	[tri:s]	See comment to number 1. Note also the failure to voice the final consonant.

2) Mistakes due to failure to distinguish all tongue positions for vowels.

1	Senior #1	*sun*	[san]	Instead of the standard English lax, mid central vowel, many students pronounce a fairly long, very low, back, unrounded vowel.
2	Junior #5	*hunting*	[hantiŋ]	See comment above.
3.	Eighth # 15 Sophomore #9	*color*	[kalə´]	See comment to number 1.
4	Sophomore #9	*fast*	[fast]	This student does not distinguish between front and back vowels for the lowest tongue positions. He says (a) instead of (ae). Most students do make this distinction.

	Student	English word	Student's Pronunciation	Comments
5	Freshman #17	*fawns*	[fɑ:nz]	This student substitutes a low back, unrounded vowel for the standard English rounded vowel of the same tongue position,
6	Fourth #1	*tongue*	[tɑŋg]	See comment to number 1.
7	Fifth #9	*running*	[rɑŋing]	See comment to number 1.

Many of their mistakes in vowel production can be corrected by drilling the tense vs. lax opposition, as has been noted above. Although it might appear that when Senior 1, for example, pronounces the word *left* as (le:ft) instead of (left) that his mistake is due to tongue position, a deeper analysis would show that this mistake is really due to a failure to distinguish between the tense /ey/ and the lax /e/. This is so because tense vowels are phonetically higher than their lax cognates.

3) Mistakes made in consonant production:

1	Senior #1	*something*	[sɑmsiŋg]	Aside from the vocalic mistake, this word contains two consonantal mistakes: s is pronounced instead of . This is a typical mistake made by Spanish speakers when speaking English, although it is not very wide-spread among Wagon Mound students. The more typical consonantal mistake in this word is the pronunciation of (ng) instead of (n). This is probably due to the fact that the only (7) which can occur in Spanish is before a (g). Many Wagon Mound students make this mistake. See also words 6 and 7, above.
2	Junior #7	*nose*	[no:s]	As is very typical of Wagon Mound students, and of Spanish speakers in general (s) is pronounced instead of (z). (Note also the failure to add an off-glide to the vowel.)
3	Sophomore #2	*picture*	[pi:ksə́]	As is true of almost every student recorded, this student does not aspirate initial, voiceless stops.
4	Eighth #4	*eyes*	[ais]	See comment to number 2.
5	Third #6	*trees*	[tri:s]	See comment to number 2.
6	Seventh #4	*pond*	[pɑn]	Many students simplified the final consonant cluster /-nd/ to (-). I am unsure whether this is a Southwest regionalism or a result of Spanish-English interference. The students should be taught to close the velum before releasing the tongue and terminating voicing.
7	Seventh #5	*weeds*	[wi:ds]	The symbol D here is meant to indicate a partially voiced (t). Presumably the weakening of voicing is in anticipation of the following (s), which is the same phenomenon described in connection with number 2, above.

8	Fourth #2	*deers*	[di:rs]	See comment to number 2.

The above lists of errors is by no means exhaustive. For several of the mistakes listed many more examples are on the tapes. The lists are intended to present a cross-sectional sampling of the pronunciation mistakes evident in the speech of Wagon Mound students. There does not seem to be any general qualitative or quantitative differences between the students of the various grades nor between the interviews of the various tapes from the same grade.

DOLORES SILVA

Consultants:

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